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FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC, SECDEF WASHDC FROM
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SUB: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON U.S. ROLE IN VIETNAM

REF: STATE 037727, SAIGON 2548

1. AS A PRELIMINARY TO DETAILED DISCUSSION OF SHIPLER NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE DATEDINED SAIGON FEB. 16, IT IS NECESSARY TO RECORD THAT EMBASSY HAS LONG BEEN AWARE OF DECISIONS TAKEN LAST FALL IN HANOI TO MOUNT ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN THIS WINTER AND SPRING TO PERSUADE THE CONGRESS TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE THE MAGNITUDE OF BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM.

2. THE STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE WAS TO BE USED AS THE MAIN COORDINATING MECHANISM, AND THE PRG DELEGATION IN PARIS WAS TO BE THE PRINCIPAL CHANNEL USING THE REMNANTS OF THE AMERICAN "PEACE MOVEMENT" TO BRING INFLUENCE TO BEAR ON SELECTIVE SUSCEPTIBLE, BUT INFLUENTIAL, ELEMENTS OF AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA AND, PARTICULARLY, ON SUSCEPTIBLE CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS. THE UNCLASSIFIED

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TIMING PREFERRED WAS TO BEGIN WITH INSERTION OF AS MUCH MATERIAL

AS POSSIBLE IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, HOPEFULLY TO SECURE CONDEMNATION OF THE GVN IN FORMAL REPORTS OF CONGRESSIONAL SUB-COMMITTEES, WHICH COULD THEN BE FOLLOWED UP AND GIVEN WIDE CIRCULATION BY "INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING" WHICH WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM AND IF POSSIBLE TO EXPAND ON THE DISTORTIONS THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO HAVE INSERTED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE FORMAL REPORTS.

3. LOOKING AT THE SHIPLER ARTICLE, PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH, THE US MISSION HAS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS:

4. PARAS 1-3 -- RAY HARRIS IS A GENERAL ELECTRIC EMPLOYEE AT BIEN HOA AIR BASE. HIS JOB IS CLASSIFIED AS A CLEANER OF PARTS AND EQUIPMENT. SHIPLER'S FIGURE OF 2,800 DAO CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT. THE CURRENT COUNT IS 2,762, A FIGURE PROVIDED BY DAO. SHIPLER DOES NOT BOTHER TO RECORD AT THIS POINT THAT THE NUMBER HAS BEEN REDUCED WITHIN THE PAST YEAR FROM SOME 5,000. HE DOES, HOWEVER, MENTION A REDUCTION IN PARAGRAPH 37 OF HIS ARTICLE, SAYING INACCURATELY THAT 2,200 HAVE LEFT SINCE JULY. HE DOES NOT RECORD FACT AVAILABLE TO HIM THAT HARRIS IS PART OF A GROUP OF CONTRACT EMPLOYEES WHOSE FUNCTION IS TO TEACH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HOW TO SERVICE PROPERLY MILITARY EQUIPMENT TURNED OVER TO THE GVN AS WELL AS MAINTAIN IT UNTIL THE TRAINING PROCESS IS COMPLETED. NOR DOES SHIPLER RECORB THE FACT KNOWN TO HIM THAT CONTRACT PERSONNEL ARE CONTINUOUSLY WITHDRAWN WHEN TRAINING IS FINISHED. THE "PROGRAM OF MILITARY AID" DOES NOT "SET THE COURSE OF THE WAR," AS SHIPLER PUT IT. THE COURSE IS SET BY THE CONTINOUS AND CONTINUING COMMUNIST BUILDUP AND EFFORTS OF THE RVNAF TO PROTECT THE POPULATION, LAND AND RESOURCES UNDER GVN CONTROL AT TIME OF THE CEASE FIRE FROM ACTUAL MILITARY ATTACKS MOUNTED BY THE OTHER SIDE, WHICH IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE.

5. PARA 4 -- THIS IS A CLASSIC. SHIPLER CATEGORICALLY POSTULATES "SOUTH VIETNAMESE VIOLATIONS" WITHOUT PRESENTING A SHRED OF EVIDENCE, AND ALLEGES AMERICAN MILITARY AID "DIRECTLY SUPPORTS" SUCH VIOLATIONS WHICH THEREBY "BREAKS THE SPIRIT OF THE ACCORDS." HE DOES RELUCTANTLY CONCEDE THAT "WHETHER THE UNITED STATES IS BREAKING THE LETTER OF THE AGREEMENT COULD PROBABLY BE ARGUED EITHER WAY." IT IS QUITE TRUE THAT TO HANOI "THE SPIRIT OF THE ACCORDS" WAS THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD DELIVE SOUTH VIETNAM UNCLASSIFIED

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BOUND HAND AND FOOT INTO THEIR HANDS. FORTUNATELY, ONLY A HANDFUL OF AMERICANS WOULD AGREE WITH THAT INTERPRETATIONOF THE "SPIRIT OF THE ACCORDS."

6. PARAS 5 AND 6 -- NO AMERICANS, CONTRACTORS OR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, ARE "INTEGRAL PARTS" OF THE RVNAF MILITAGY SYSTEM. THEY PROVIDE LIMITED AND TEMPORARY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ONLY TO HELP THE VIETNAMESE BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT. TO DESCRIBE "PENTA-

GON-BASED GENERALS WHO TOUR AIRFIELDS" AS "INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE SUPPLY, TRANSPORT AND INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS" OBVIOUSLY DISTORTS THE MEANING OF THE WORD "INTEGRAL" TO THE BREAKING POINT. AMERICAN GENERALS VISIT NOT ONLY VIETNAM BUT OTHER FRIENDLY NATIONS THROUGHOUT SOUTHEAST ASIA. THEY ALSO OBSERVE THE USE BEING MADE OF MILITARY AID. (END-USE INSPECTION BY US PERSONNEL IS REQUIRED BY THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE ACT.) THE TERM "LIAISON MEN" PRESUMABLY REFERS TO DAO'S REGIONAL LIAISON OFFICERS. IT IS SIMPLY UNTRUE THAT THEY GIVE "ADVICE," AS SHIPLER REPORTS, AGAIN WITHOUT PRODUCING THE SLIGHTEST SCRAP OF EVIDENCE. EVEN IF PERMISSIBLE, NONE OF THE RLOS IS QUALIFIED. THEY ARE CIVILIANS WHO, IF THEY HAD PREVIOUS MILITARY EXPERIENCE, WERE ENLISTED MEN OR JUNIOR OFFICERS WITH LITTLE OR NO BATTLE MANAGEMENT TRAINING. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ARVN OFFICERS WOULD HEED THEIR ADVICE EVEN IF THEY OFFERED IT. AND IT IS SIMPLY A FALSEHOOD THAT THE CIA GIVES ANY "ADVICE" TO THE NATIONAL POLICE.

7. PARAS 7 AND 8 -- TOTAL BUDGET COST OF MILITARY AID TO THE GVN IN FY-74 IS 1059.2 MILLION. OF THE PROPOSED 390.8 MILLION INCREASE, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT ABOUT ONE-THIRD IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO AMMUNITION. AMMUNITION IS EXPENDED AT A RATE OF 20 TO 50 PERCENT LESS THAN DURING THE LAST YEAR OF THE WAR, DUE TO US-IMPOSED CONSTRAINTS AND RVNAF SELF-IMPOSED MANAGEMENT CONTROLS. THE US DOES NOT "DUMP MILLIONS IN CASH INTO THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE BUDGET." THE US PUTS GOODS INTO THE ECONOMY WHICH ARE SOLD FOR PIASTERS AND THEN ASSIGNED FMR SUPPORT OF MUTUALLY AGREED PROGRAMS.

8. PARA 9 -- THIS PARAGRAPH IS ANOTHER CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF DISGUIISING PROPAGANDA UNDER THE PROTECTIVE RUBRIC OF "INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING." SHIPLER NOW ALLEGES THAT U.S. MILITARY AID IS INDISPENSABLE TO WHAT IS CATEGORICALLY DESCRIBED AS "THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF RESISTANCE TO ANY ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS." THE IMPLICATION IS GLARINGLY OBVIOUS, UNCLASSIFIED

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ALTHOUGH UNSTATED, THAT THE GVN SHOULD DO SO. BEYOND DOUBT, THAT IS HANOI'S POSITION. IN THE NEXT SENTENCE, SHIPLER STATES THAT "MILITARILY, THE EXTENSIVE AID HAS ENABLED PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE AT TIMES, LAUNCHING INTENSIVE ATTACKS WITH ARTILLERY AND JET FIGHTERS AGAINST VIET CONG HELD TERRITORY." SHIPLER DOES NOT THINK IT IMPORTANT TO INFORM THE READERS OF HIS PAPER THAT THE "AT TIMES" IN THE ABOVE SENTENCE WERE RETALIATORY STRIKES SUCH AS THE ONES MADE AFTER THE COMMUNISTS SHELLED THE BIEN HOA AIR BASE AND LATER DESTROYED THE NHA BE PETROLEUM STORAGE TANKS, AND THAT THE GVN HAS A PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED POLICY OF TAKING RETALIATORY ACTION WHENEVER THE NVA/VC FORCES SO ATTACK GVN INSTALLATIONS. SINCE THERE IS NO MENTION OF THE THOUSANDS OF NVA/VC VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASE FIRE, THE ONLY LOGICAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT SHIPLER CONSIDERS IT A VIOLATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT ONLY WHEN THE GVN RESPONDS TO THESE ATTACKS.

9. PARAS 10 AND 11 -- IN THESE PARAGRAPHS, THE BIAS OF THE ARTICLE BECOMES GROSSLY OBVIOUS. SHIPLER CONTENDS THAT AMERICAN AID PERMITS PRESIDENT THIEU "TO FORESTALL A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT", STATING THAT HE HAS "REJECTED THE PARIS AGREEMENT'S PROVISION FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS, IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE GIVEN ACCESS TO THE PRESS, PERMISSION TO RUN CANDIDATES AND FREEDOM TO RALLY SUPPORT OPENLY AND WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM THE POLICE. MR. THIEU HAS OFFERED THE ELECTIONS, BUT WITHOUT THE FREEDOMS." THIY STATEMENT IS A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF THE FACTS. THE PARIS AGREEMENT CALLED FOR A CEASE FIRE. THEN WAS TO COME THE DELINEATION OF THE AREAS OF CONTROL, THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD WHICH WOULD PREPARE FOR ELECTIONS UNDER INTERNATIONALLY SUPERVISED CON
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